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The Most Successful American

By Paul Leventhal

WASHINGTON — The impeachment of Richard Nixon would be the impeachment of us all. Mr. Nixon's chief offense is that so mortal a man, so representative of the flaws of this country, should be President. And the fact that he could become President, and, by a record plurality, is itself meaningful in terms of what we have become as a people.

What is most disturbing about the scandalous behavior of the President —and the people around him—is that the Nixon scandal is the unraveling of the American Dream.

The success story of Mr. Nixon could be the success story of a 60-year-old executive, with a modest wife and two devoted daughters, who overcomes impoverished beginnings and personal adversities to become president of the world's largest corporation. He makes it by plain hard work, shrewd wits and sheer tenacity. What he lacks in personality he makes up for in the strength of his purpose, in his absolute drive.

He makes powerful friends who bestow favors on him, which he accepts as justified reward for the strength and value of his leadership. Furthermore, he knows that what is best for these successful people is also best for the corporation. And he acts accordingly. He is certain that he sees things right, and that it is his critics who undermine the system by questioning his judgment.

He frankly indulges in all the material pleasures that his success has rewarded him: two estates and a rustic hideaway in addition to his own palatial home at corporate headquarters. He accepts without question the gifts and special favors that make the regal appointments of these residences possible. A yacht and several jetliners, all owned by the stockholders, are always available for his personal and business pleasure anywhere in the world.

He is an avid sportsfan, with a special liking for the manliness of football, and his prestige permits him friendships and confidences with coaches and league presidents.

And all the while, he pays homage to his simple past by making a special effort to worship God seriously.

He is, in essence, the most successful American in the game Americans play best—if wish they could. And his excesses, which are at a time, are understood in that context.

Income tax [illegible] even unreported income, [illegible] to many Americans [illegible] expense account, [illegible] moonlighting have become [illegible] way of life.

Ruthless [illegible] ruthlessness to eavesdrop on [illegible] rivals, to reach the very [illegible] the rules of the game: behavior [illegible] with grudging envy [illegible] those who crave the light, with [illegible] those who [illegible] star, and who [illegible] many [illegible]

An intense sense of privacy, a strict sense of order, a keenly strategic mind which reshapes the truth to guarantee success: each a mark of those who attain power and prominence in America.

Mr. Nixon's failing is that in having all of these qualities and in doing all of these things, he has gone too far —perhaps only a step too far, but too far nevertheless. His offense is quantitative, not qualitative.

It is being heard more and more that the stopping of Mr. Nixon would be a triumph for our system of laws —a triumph of law over man. If he is stopped, it indeed would be that— but by a very close call in a titanic struggle with a man who has gone perhaps only a step too far.

The true test of our Constitution will be whether the government of the people ultimately rejects and ejects a President who carries the excesses of the people too far. If the Constitution works, it will allow the nation to judge itself in the extreme and to pull back for its own salvation.

The Nixon scandal gives us the opportunity to see ourselves and to say "enough." At least the Constitution permits us to do that reflexively by switching on the impeachment mechanism. But facing up to the [illegible] silicence of our own [illegible] another matter.

[illegible] Mr. Nixon [illegible]

[illegible] criminal for [illegible] subcommittee.